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ACTION SS 70

INFO NSCE 00,CIAE 00,SSO 00,DODE 00,USIE 00,NSAE 00,CCO 00,/070 W

P R 261045Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5420
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3930
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY SAIGON VIENTIANE 2272

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE 12/30/97
PORTIONS EXCISED AS INDICATED

Saigon 4140 8/26/67

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 4140

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

LIMDIS

1. EMBOFFS HAD LONG LSNCH AUGUST 25 WITH [redacted] ed

[redacted] THE TOAN VIET BLOC, WHICH HELD ITS ORGANIZING CONVENTION IN SAIGON THIS MONTH, ELECTED

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OFFICERS AND PROCEEDED TO ENDORSE THE SO-CALLED COCONUT LISTS (NUMBERS 33 AND 34) FOR THE SENATE.

MICROFILMED BY RS/R

2. [redacted] ed

PARTY WHICH TRANSCENDS RELIGIOUS AND REGIONAL LINES. BLOC IS FIRST STEP. IF THEY SUCCEED IN ELECTION AT LEAST TWO OF THEIR THREE LISTS TO THE SENATE, THEY WILL GO ON AND PUT UP CANDIDATES FOR THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS. HOPING TO WIN AS MANY AS FORTY OR FIFTY SEATES IN THAT ASSEMBLY. BLOC WOULD THEN BE IN A POSITION TO EXERCISE SIGNICICANT INFLUENCE WITHIN FUTURE

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3. [redacted] ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS WITH THE BLOC WERE AT PRIMIN KY'S SPECIFIC REQUEST. FOR SEVERAL MONTHS HE HAD BEEN OUT OF THE POLITICOL MAINSTREAM, LIVING QUIETLY [redacted] AND HAVING CONTACT ONLY WITH [redacted] HIS OLD COLLABORATORS. SHORTLY AFTER THE FIRST OF THE YEAR, BEFOR [redacted] LEFT TO TAKE UP HIS POST AS [redacted] HE CAME TO [redacted]

[redacted] HE SAID THAT HE HAD STUDIED

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POLITICAL PARTY ORGANIZATION ELSEWHERE IN PREPARATION FOR FORMING THE BLOC, AND HE DEVOTED A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THIS STUDY TO U.S. INSTITUTIONS AND PARTIES. HE CLAIMS HE LEARNED A GOOD DEAL FROM THIS EFFORT, BUT HE DISCOVERED EARLY ON THAT THERE WERE POLITICAL PHENOMENA UNIQUE TO VIET NAM WHICH DID NOT ALWAYS FIT FOREIGN PATTERNS. NEVERTHELESS, HE WAS ABLE TO TRANSPLANT AND USE SEVERAL IDEAS.
4. WHEN TALK TURNED TO PERSONALITIES ON VARIOUS SENATE LISTS, [redacted] ADMETTED THAT SEVERAL OF THE HOA HAO AND CAO DAI FIGURING ON THE COCONUT LISTS WERE HARDLY PEOPLE OF STATURE. BLOC HAD BEEN OBLIGED TO ACCEPT THE PEOPLE PUT FORWARD BY THE SECTS WHICH WAS, AFTER ALL, A POLITICAL FACT OF LIFE WHEN PUTTING TOGETHER A COALITION. IN TERMS OF TALENT, HE ADMITTED IN PASSING, THE BEST SENATE LIST WAS THAT HEADED BY TRAN VAN DO. ITS CHANCES FOR ELECTION, HOWEVER, HE TENDED TO RATE AS POOR. WHAT IT LACKED WAS MASS SUPPORT WHICH HE HOPES [redacted] CONONUT LISTS WILL HAVE.
5. CONVERSATION SHIFTED AT THIS POINT TO THE PRESIDENTIAL SLATES AND AFTER ASKING EMBOFFS FOR THEIR JUDGMENT RE STRENGTH OF VARIOUS CONTENDERS, [redacted] STATED HIS CONVICTION THAT SUU

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WAS NOW THE STRONGEST OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES. HE FEELS THAT HUONG HAS LOST GROUND SINCE CAMPAIGN GOT UNDERWAY IN EARNEST. BEFORE THAT, ACCORDING [redacted] TALENTED ADVISERS SUCH AS NGUYEN

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VAN TRUONG, VO LONG TRIEU AND AU TRUONG THANH, HAD CREATED A MOST FAVORABLE IMAGE OF HUONG AS HONEST, DEDICATED INDIVIDUAL WHO HAD LIVED IN VIRTUAL EXILE AT VUNG TAU FOLLOWING HIS OUSTER BY NGUYEN KHANH IN JANUARY 1965. LATELY, HOWEVER, HUONG CAMP HAS BEEN MAKING SOME TACTICAL MISTAKES AND IS GIVING THE IMPRESSION OF BEING TOO CLEVER. [redacted] FEELS THAT THIS MESSAGE IS GETTING ACROSS TO THE ELECTORATE AND AS A CONSEQUENTE HUONG'S STAR IS DESCENDING. SUU, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS NO REAL ORGANIZATION BUT HIS SIMPLICITY AND APPARENT HONESTY ARE BEING COMMUNICATED TO THE MASS. [redacted] SAID THAT IF THIEU AND KY DID NOT BESTIR THEMSELVES BETWEEN NOW AND ELECTION DAY SUU MIGHT EMERGE THE VICTOR.

6. [redacted] COMMENTED ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THIEU AND KY, ADMITTING THAT THE TWO INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR ENTOURAGES WERE NOT CLOSE. KY, HE SAID, APPEARED TO HAVE LOST INTEREST IN POLITICS SINCE THE THIEU-KY LIST WAS FORMED. AS EXAMPLE, HE SAID THAT HE HAD ARRANGED FOR KY TO MEET WITH CAO DAI AND HOA

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HAO LEADERS WITHIN THE [redacted] BLOC BEFORE THEY DISBANDED TO RETURN TO THEIR PROVINCES FOR THE CAMPAIGN. THE ARRANGEMENT FELL THROUGH; KY FAILED TO MEET WITH THEM AND THEY WENT OFF WITHOUT MAKING CONTACT WITH THE GOVERNMENT. EHIEU-KY ORGANIZATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE ALSO SEEMED TO BE SPUTTERING. HE CITED CASE OF BINH TUY PROVINCE, WHICH HE HAD RECENTLY VISITED. 280,000 VN$ HAD BEEN BUDGETED TO FINANCE THE CAMPAIGN THERE, BUT AS OF AUGUST 21, NO MONEY HAD YET APPEARED IN THE PROVINCE. HE ALSO SAID THAT THIEU-KY POSTERS HAD NOT EVEN BEEN CIRCULATED.

HE THEN WENT ON TO OBSERVE THAT THE ELECTIONS WOULD CERTAINLY BE HONEST, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THE FACT THAT THE THIEU-KY ORGANIZATIONS COUNTRY-WIDE WAS SO INEFFICIENT. RENDERING IT EVEN LESS EFFICIENT, OF COURSE, WAS THE FAILURE OF THOSE CLOSE TO EACH OF THE GENERALS TO COORDINATE THEIR ACTIVITIES. HE CONTRASTED THE GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE MOST UNFAVORABLY WITH THE ONE DIEM AND NHU HAD BEEN ABLE TO COMMAND IN THE LAST ELECTIONS THEY HELD.

7. POST-ELECTION PERIOD WILL BE A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS TIME ACCORDING TO [redacted] THERE WILL BE A PURGE IN THE ARMY, HE PREDICTED.

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AND WHEN PRESSED FOR DETAILS, SAID ONLY THAT "THE GENERALS WILL

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PURGE OTHER GENERALS." HE ALSO FEARS THAT IF THE THIEU-KY SLATE WINS, REGARDLESS OF BY WHAT PERCENTAGE, CRY OF FOUL WILL GO UP AMONG THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES AND THE AN QUANG BUDDHISTS WILL TRY TO MOVE IN TO SUPPORT THEIR CHARGES WITH STREET DEMONSTRATIONS. TARGET WILL BE CATHOLIC, FORMER CAN LAO GENERAL THIEU, AND WHEREAS KY WAS ABLE TO STAND UP TO THE STRUGGLE LAST SPRING AND TAKE ITS MEASURE, [redacted] DOUBTS THAT THIEU WILL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN A RENASCENCE. ASKED WHETHER GOVERNMENT COULD NOT MOVE QUICKLY AND DISSIPATE POST-ELECTION PROTEST BY INCORPORATING REPRESENTATIVES OF DEFEATED LISTS IN NEW GOVERNMENT, [redacted] ADMITTED THIS WAS A POSSIBILITY, BUT RATED IT REMOTE BECAUSE (1) HE DOUBTED THIEU-KY GOVT COULD MANEUVER THAT SKILLFULLY OR QUICKLY, AND (2) AMOUR PROPRE OF CIVILIAN CANDIDATES HAD ALREADY BEEN WOUNDED BY SOME OF KY'S CAMPAIGN REMARKS TO POINT WHERE THEY WOULD BE UNWILLING TO COLLABORATE WITH GENERALS UNDER ANY CONDITIONS. BUNKER

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3931
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AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2273

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8. ALTERNATIVE TO THIEU-KY VOCTORY IN THE FORM OF A SUU-DAN TRIUMPH IS A GLOOMY PROSPECT FOR [ ] SUU DOES NOT, IN HIS OPINION, HAVE THE NECESSARY INTELLIGENCE AND VIGOR TO SERVE AS A CHIEF OF STATE. NEVERTHELESS, HE CONSIDERS HIM THE LEADING CIVILIAN CHALLENGER. THERE IS EVEN, HE SAID, THE RUMOR CIRCULATING THAT PRIMIN KY WILL WITHDRAW FROM THE CAMPAIGN IN A PRESS CONFERENCE BETWEEN NOW AND ELECTION DAY, THUS INSURING A SUU VICTORY. [ ] IS INCLINED TO DOUBT THIS RUMOR, BUT ADMITS

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THAT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE IN VIETNAMESE POLITICS.
9. COMMENT: AT THE OUTSET OF LUNCH, AS [ ] DESCRIBED HIS EFFORTS TO FORM THE TOAN VIET BLOC, HE WAS ANIMATED AND IN SEEMING GOOD SPIRITS. WHEN ASKED TO ESTIMATE THE COCONUT LISTS' ELECTION CHANCES, HE SAID HE WAS TRADITIONALLY AN OPTIMIST AND THEREFORE HOPED ALL THREE WOULD BE ELECTED. AFTER LUNCH, WHEN HE GOT INTO THE DISCUSSION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN AND THE PROBLEMS WITHIN THE THIEU-KY CAMP, [ ]S SPIRITS NOTICEABLY SAGGED. QUITE POSSIBLE THAT HE HAS GROWN DISENCHANTED WITH KY OF LATE DUE, PERHAPS, TO PRIMIN'S APPARENT POLITICAL INSOUCIANCE OR BECAUSE OF RECENT SPATE OF REPORTS THAT GOVT IS SUPPORTING SIX

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SENATE LISTS, ONLY ONE OF WHICH IS COCONUT LIST [redacted] HAS BEEN CLOSE POLITICAL ADVOSER TO KY IN THE PAST. HE MAY NO LONGER BE AN INSIDER IF, INDEED, ANYONE IS. BUNKER

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